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SIPDIS

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JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#)  
SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2008

In Today's Papers

**Gul and Baykal Mend Fences at Sogut Festivities**  
Media outlets report President Abdullah Gul, opposition CHP Leader Deniz Baykal, MHP Leader Devlet Bahceli and cabinet ministers participated in the ceremony to commemorate the 727th anniversary of the founding of the Ottoman Empire in Sogut town in the Marmara province of Bilecik. President Gul said, "We sacrifice our interests when we waste our energy fighting with each other," in reference to the ongoing controversy between Prime Minister Erdogan and media mogul Aydin Dogan's Dogan Media Group over alleged irregularities in the Germany-based Turkish charity Deniz Feneri. Islamist-oriented Zaman reports "the ice is breaking" between President Gul and opposition CHP Leader Baykal as Baykal and Gul shook hands at the ceremonies yesterday. In addition, papers note Baykal, who opposed Gul's candidacy for president referred to Gul for the first time publicly as "Mr. President."

**The Erdogan-Dogan Spat Continues**  
Media outlets continue to report on the ongoing spat between Prime Minister Erdogan and the Dogan Media Group regarding the fraud trial of Germany-based Islamist-oriented Deniz Feneri charity and its alleged links to Islamist-leaning media outlets in Turkey and the ruling AKP officials. The Dogan Group's newspapers and television channels report allegations that donations raised by the Deniz Feneri charity in Istanbul were used to support the AKP and media outlets close to the governing party. Saturday's papers report the International Press Institute (IPI) released a statement asking Prime Minister Erdogan to cease his attempts to pressure the Turkish media. Mainstream Vatan says the PM shrugged off the call made by IPI, which Vatan describes as, "One of the most prestigious press organizations around the world." Erdogan asked, "Who is IPI to issue me an ultimatum?" Erdogan also lashed out at media tycoon Aydin Dogan for pressuring the government for favors. Aydin Dogan rejected the PM's claim, saying he had not asked the government for anything illegal. Liberal Radikal reports on Monday Erdogan's remarks in Istanbul was again "full of insults, threats and blackmail." Saturday papers report former Parliament Speaker Bulent Arinc denounced the irregularities within Deniz Feneri charity, stressing that the charges should be examined by the Turkish

authorities as well.

Papers report that on Wednesday, a verdict is expected in the Deniz Feneri case in Germany. Some officials from opposition parties CHP and DSP will travel to Germany to observe court proceedings.

#### Editorial Commentary on Dogan Media Group--the PM Controversy

Oktaay Eksi wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "It seems Prime Minister Erdogan needs to learn about the indispensable role of the freedom of the press in a democracy. In a normal democracy, he would have to address allegations in the Deniz Feneri Frankfurt indictment instead of blaming newspapers for reporting the indictment. If only he knew democracy and believed the supremacy of law."

Tamer Korkmaz wrote in Islamist leaning Yeni Safak: "It is not easy to believe that the Dogan Media Group is only after corruption cases because of their journalistic integrity. The Dogan Media Group seems to like trying to defame the government. As the archives tell us, when serious corruption cases occurred during the February 28 process, the Dogan group did not pursue out a single story on this topic."

Erol Manisali in leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet: "If we really oppose the type of fraud in the Deniz Feneri case, we must also oppose the actions of American and European imperialism in the Middle East. The March 12 and September 12 military takeovers, Operation Provide Comfort, March 6 1995, November 2 2002, and July 22, 2007 are all links in the same chain. Merely opposing the irregularities in the Deniz Feneri won't mean anything other than

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saving the current day."

"An Important Visit from the U.S." (Ortadoğu)  
Media outlets report on the visit of Chairman of U.S. Joint Chief of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen as a chance for the U.S. and Turkey to discuss the crisis in the Caucasus, the PKK, and the ongoing military coordination between the two countries. Leftist Taraf carries the headline, "Was this the Montreux Visit?" and speculates this "surprise" visit may have been Mullen's attempt to discuss the revision of the Montreux Agreement. Islamist-oriented Zaman carries the headline, "U.S. Chief of Staff Discussed the Bosphorus Straits with Erdogan." Meanwhile, far right Ortadoğu reports in "An Important Visit from the U.S." that "Mullen is Chief of Turkish General Staff General Basbug's first official guest."

In a related story, over the weekend mainstreams Milliyet and Sabah reported the USS McFaul, described by Sabah as a "guided missile destroyer," has re-entered the Black Sea. Milliyet reports "it looks like the McFaul will enter and exit the Black Sea in line with the Montreux restrictions in order to maintain a presence in the Black Sea." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet referred to the ship's maneuvers as "cheating" in that the point of the Montreux restrictions "is to limit warship presence in the Black Sea," but the entrance and exit of the McFaul allows it to abide by the restrictions while "maintaining its military presence in the Black Sea." Reports highlighted the 21-day limitation for foreign war ships according to the Montreux Convention, and mentioned that the USS McFaul spent less than three weeks but also speculated about the legitimacy of a revolving door approach. Hurriyet noted earlier rumors that, "the U.S. will dilute Montreux by exiting and re-entering the Black Sea, and that's exactly what happened."

DTP Presents Defense in Closure Case Tomorrow  
Mainstream Sabah reports DTP chairman Ahmet Turk will present the party's verbal defense at the Constitutional Court tomorrow. Reportedly, at the Court, Ahmet Turk will warn, "If the DTP is closed, the Kurdish people will distance themselves from the political platform, resulting in chaos and violence. We've been reiterating that the Kurdish issue can be resolved by peaceful means. The DTP doesn't want violence, but peace. Our party is the defender of the legal solution for the Kurdish issue. Closing the DTP will mean insisting on not resolving the Kurdish issue."

#### Editorial Commentary on Turkey/Armenia

Erdal Safak wrote in mainstream Sabah: "During a press conference in Baku, Energy Minister Guler was asked whether there was a possibility the Nabucco pipeline could pass through Armenia. Guler said "This is not on the agenda for now." This answer indicates that there was a vast change in balances in the Caucasus following the war between Georgia and Russia. Georgia is no longer a safe route for the Nabucco pipeline. At this time, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Europe and all other investors will seriously evaluate Armenia's participation in the Nabucco project. Aside from Armenia, there is only one other country the pipeline can pass through - Iran. Of course, this choice upsets the U.S. immensely. Just to avoid this choice, the U.S. is pressuring Turkey to open the Turkey-Armenia border, and Ankara announced the opening of a new page in Turkey-Armenia relations. At the same time Minister Guler is not confirming the possibility of Armenia's participation in the pipeline."

Semih Idiz wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "In order to end the hostility with Armenia regarding the events of 1915, the experienced Ambassador Volkan Vural suggested that Turkey say, "We do not approve of what happened in 1915." In addition, Ambassador Vural suggests Turkey pay the Armenians affected by those incidents a symbolic compensation. Unfortunately, Vural was harshly criticized for his words. But his intellectual capacity is enough to respond bravely to this criticism. We have right to expect the same kind of

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bravery from Armenia. The political leadership on both sides has a huge responsibility in this issue. It is not possible to solve this problem with mutual accusations. The only way toward a solution is a scientific examination of history and political encouragement that can address current needs."

Ali H. Aslan in Islamist-oriented Zaman: "Washington appreciates the new military-civilian developments in Turkey concerning the Kurdish question and President Gul's visit to Yerevan. It will, however, be difficult for Turkey to become the 'winner' regarding the Armenian problem without healing the wounds of the incidents between Muslims and Christians during World War I. Dialogue and a mutual respect are necessary for this to happen. I believe 'empathy' will help a lot in getting over national and international enmities."

Editorial Commentary on U.S. Elections, Pakistan

Ceyda Karan wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "Russian leader Putin joined the Europeans in openly supporting Barack Obama. There is a general concern about the future of the world if McCain and Palin win the U.S. presidential elections. 80 percent of Europeans wish to see Obama as the new President of the United States. Meanwhile, the Republicans' campaign is based on an entirely aggressive and militarist approach. If the Democrats fail against Republicans this time, the Europeans will have to work with a U.S. leadership who cares not for the rest of the world's concerns at all."

Sedat Sertoglu in mainstream Aksam: "The U.S. began crossing the Pakistani border in order to pursue the Taliban and al-Qaeda, who fled there after attacks in Afghanistan. The number of Turkish martyrs in clashes with the PKK terrorists increases every day. Turkey should also pursue terrorists into northern Iraq whenever necessary, and shouldn't worry about the U.S. reactions against such types of hot pursuit."

TV News:  
CNN Turk

Domestic News

- Foreign Minister Ali Babacan said the fifth round of indirect talks between Syria and Israel will be held on September 18-19 in Istanbul.

- One soldier has been killed when a landmine, believed to have been planted by the PKK, went off in the southeastern province of Siirt.

- An August survey conducted by labor union KESK indicates a family of four needs 730 YTL monthly to meet its food expenses.

#### International News

- A Russian passenger liner has crashed in the central Russian city of Perm, killing all 88 passengers, including a Turk, and crew.

- Russian troops left positions near the Georgian Black Sea port of Poti, as agreed in a deal between Russia and the European Union earlier this month.

- NATO Military Committee Chairman Admiral Giampaolo Di Paola says the military alliance does not want a new Cold War with Russia.

WILSON